

Freeethought

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED RATIONALIST MONTHLY



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God is a myth; immortality an illusion; Religion, a gigantic fraud

Letters

ASTROLOGY ISSUE

Sir:—I have gone through your special Astrology issue and I was very much impressed.

I request you to kindly send me this magazine monthly.

P. Y. Lele, Rawatbhate

FREETHOUGHT

Sir:—After our last State Annual Conference at Ernakulam, I am very proud to write that the Rationalist Movement in Kerala feels strengthened. I am very happy to see that FREETHOUGHT is also very much improved.

Narayanan Periya, Kerala

FAILURE OF ASTROLOGERS

Sir:—Why did the astrologers of India, fail to forecast the Election results of March, 1977? The Astrologers did not have the guts to predict the PRESIDENT of India either.

J. Rama Row, Chelluru.

MALAYALANADU AND KOVOOR

Sir:—I take this opportunity to mention here that, I have been receiving the issues of 'FREETHOUGHT' regularly. I am really proud of the progress made by the I.R.A. within a short period.

I also would like to mention here that Mr. Tikkurissi Sukumaran Nair, in his report published in 'Malayalanadu Weekly' Box No. 8, Lakkam No. 42, dated 3rd March 1977 has challenged Dr. A. T. Kovoov. However, no steps seem to have been taken by I.R.A. or Dr. Kovoov so far. I am sure, on receipt of this letter, you will look into the matter and do the best possible to reveal the truth.

C. Bhaskaran. Baroda.

(A brief report on Malayalanadu Hoax and Dr. Kovoov's letter to the Editor, Illustrated Weekly of India, is published elsewhere in this issue. It is hoped that this report will clarify the position —Ed.)

AN APOLOGY

We are sorry to announce that in view of the overall increase in FREETHOUGHT printing costs and Association Expenses, at the last Annual General Body Meeting of Indian Rationalist Association, it was decided to increase the price of FREETHOUGHT and the Membership Fee for the Association as follows:

FREETHOUGHT	—	Single Copy	80 Paise
		Annual subscription	Rs. 9/-
Membership Fee	—	Ordinary Members	Rs. 18/- p.a.
		Student Members	Rs. 9/- p.a.

Membership in the Association is restricted to confirmed Rationalists and the Journal is sent to them free of any extra cost.

The revised rates will be applicable for all the New Membership Fee, New Subscriptions as well as all renewals received on or after 1-9-77. In respect of the Membership Fee and Subscriptions already received and which may be received or renewed on or before 31-8-77, the old rates will continue to be applicable.

Members, Subscribers and Agents are requested to kindly note the above changes in rates.

—TREASURER I.R.A.

SANKARA'S APOLOGISTS

Of all the Hindu philosophies (there are many), Sankara's is in greatest circulation today amongst the educated. Insecurity and frustration seem to drive the people towards a philosophy as devoid of content as his own Brahman and soul. The sceptic intellectual seems to derive a comforting ideal from the thought that universe and life are nothing. This stagnant, purposeless, insipid philosophy is supposed to offer an alternative to the life of ambition and drive typified by the life of an average westerner (whose life is a rat race full of insecurity). It is not recognised that the solution is not in getting away from life; but to order life to reduce insecurity—both social and economic.

By creating an illusion in the shape of Soul and Brahman, one cannot dispel ignorance and insecurity. The entire edifice Sankara so pains-

takingly built on such unreal postulates was bound to crumble. During Sankara's time no one knew enough of biology. The question whether the soul is in the male 'sperm' or female 'egg' was not asked. That animals are equally entitled to 'souls' as they were in the same evolutionary chain; or that the population explosion would have needed a faster 'soul production'; or that death itself is nothing but decay of too many body cells to be replaced—these ideas did not have to be contended with by Sankara. The knowledge of the universe was so meagre that speculation took the place of knowledge. He had to extrapolate with no tools at his command

If today intellectuals should strain to justify Sankara, the fault does not lie with Sankara. He was a great intellectual for his period. But his knowledge of the solar system or the

human body could not match that of an elementary school student of today.

However, we should strongly condemn the present day pseudo-intellectuals like Chinmayananda who make a living by dishing out ideas proved wrong. There is a large number of intellectuals who are interested in the 'status quo' in

social and economic spheres to facilitate exploitation of the majority by a minority. These people find a convenient tool in Sankara's philosophy. It is this collusion of money with intellect that has to be broken if Sankara's philosophy is to be consigned to its rightful place as a museum piece.

□

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Thought for the Month

"THE MOST OBVIOUS CONTRADICTION IN SANKARA'S PHILOSOPHY IS THE ADMISSION OF THE REALITY OF THAT WHICH IS DECLARED IN THE SAME BREATH TO BE A DELUSION"

—M. N. ROY

SANKARA AND ADVAITA*

T. S. SELVARAJ

Sankara, the propogator of idealistic philosophy of Advaita lived during 8th century A.D. During the short span of 30 and odd years of his life, he travelled, with none of the modern means of quick transport, throughout the length and breadth of India and established monasteries at Badri in the North, Sringeri in the South, Puri in the East and Dwaraka in the West. Of his several works, his commentary on Prasthanas Thrayi-Upanisads, Gita and Brahma Sutras— is considered to be his greatest contribution to philosophic thought by his adherents.

SANKARA'S PLAGIARISM

In spite of all his brilliance, the philosophy of Advaita attributed to him was not his brain-child. It was an adaptation of the philosophy developed by Mahayana Buddhists like Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Buddhapalita and others, with some new terminologies. For this reason, perhaps, Sankara is often called a Crypto Buddhist. Having borrowed their philosophy, Sankara, like some of our modern politicians, was clever enough to use it as his own, vehemently denouncing the Mahayanists for preaching the very same philosophy he was preaching. During Sankara's time Buddhism was on the decline and Sankara's borrowed Advaita accelerated the pace of decadence. The moorings of the Advaita philosophy as preached by Sankara and as developed by Mahayanists must be traced to the Upanisads. But the credit for developing the rudiments of the philosophy embedded in the Upanishads goes to the Mahayanists. Any innovation made therein by Sankara is utterly insignificant. The four monasteries founded by Sankara were also on the model of Buddhist monasteries.

Sankara's Advaita philosophy may briefly be stated in two propositions:

1. Brahman is the only reality. It is the supreme soul or consciousness. It is indivisible, undefinable, immutable, indescribable and actionless. It is Sat (existence), Chit (knowledge) and Ananda (Pure bliss).

*This article is largely based on Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's "What is living and what is dead in Indian Philosophy".

2. All else is false (mithya). The unreality of the phenomenal world we see around us is one of illusion (maya) caused by ignorance (avidya).

Judged from a common sense viewpoint the above do not make sense and cannot be accepted by a rational mind. There is no question of defining Brahman because it is undefinable. Sankara asks us to accept Brahman on the authority of the Vedas which being revealed (!) cannot be questioned. Brahman cannot be known in any other way except through the Vedas.

Acceptance of the authority of the Vedas is the sine qua non for initiation in advaita, for the entire system is built on the unverifiable hypothesis of Brahman and Maya.

SOUL AND CONSCIOUSNESS

According to Advaita, consciousness is the very essence of soul or Brahman and not its attribute.

Long before Sankara, the Samkhyas, Lokayatas and the Nyaya Vaisheshikas have exposed the hollowness of this 'world-denying philosophy' of vedanta and its 'consciousness.' Sankara refers to their arguments in his Bhasya and attempts to refute them.

SAMKHYA

According to Samkhya, Primeval matter, 'Pradhana' or 'Prakriti', is the fundamental stuff from which evolution took place. The original Samkhya Sutra is not extant. Later writers and commentators have watered it down very much to subserve the interests of religionists. However, glimpses of it are available from "Caraka Samhita" a medical

treatise. According to it, soul is a PRODUCT of Prakriti and not something co-eternal with it.

LOKAYATA

The Lokayata view is very close to that of Samkhya. According to the Lokayatas, the soul is nothing but the body with the attribute of consciousness. When the material elements assume the form of the body, consciousness is also produced in it.

Sankara argued that these two systems (Samkhya and Lokayata) contradicted the Veda; that consciousness which was, altogether a new quality could not be produced from unconscious matter; and if it is assumed that wherever there is a body there is consciousness and wherever there is no body there is no consciousness, how is it then that dead bodies do not have consciousness? From this it will be more correct to assume that soul is something distinct from the body.

"MADA SAKTHI"

The counter argument put forward is termed "Mada Sakthi". The herbs making up an intoxicating drink do not by themselves possess intoxicating power. But when mixed up in a certain proportion they produce intoxication or "Mada Sakthi" when consumed. Similarly in the transformation of the body from unconscious matter, consciousness takes shape. This consciousness remains in the body so long as the body retains its state of transformation from the material elements. When a body is dead it returns to its pre-transformed state and disintegrates and in consequence loses its consciousness. It is not that an intellectual

of the calibre of Sankara is not aware of the difference between a living body and a dead body; he purposely makes use of this argument to exploit the prevailing superstition among the people and project the theory of transmigration of souls, viz., that after the body is dead the soul leaves the body and takes abode in some other body.

NYAYA VAISHESICA

Whereas according to Samkhya, soul is a product of primeval matter and according to Lokayata, part of the body, in Nyaya Vaishesika it is something distinct from the body. But the soul in Nyaya philosophy is an inert unconscious entity in which knowledge etc. inhere. Consciousness is used in this philosophy in its empirical sense. It is an attribute of soul and not its essence. consciousness is acquired by soul under certain specific condition viz. by conjoining with the internal sense organ ('manas' or mind), external sense organs and objects of external sense organs.

The Nyaya Vaishesikas felt that psychical qualities like pleasure, pain, motivation, aversion, consciousness etc. cannot belong to the body which is purely physical. Hence they thought it necessary to admit some substance other than body. To account for such qualities, they invented a soul. This soul being transient has nothing to do with the universal soul of Sankara.

SANKARA'S INCONSISTENCY

Sankara, though aware of all this, tries to make full use of Nyaya Vaishesika's view of soul to discredit the other two systems. In doing so, he has only exposed himself to the risk of inner inconsistency in his

philosophical position, since the Nyaya Vaishesika view of soul negates the very essence of Sankara's philosophy viz that the ultimate reality is the soul identified with mere consciousness.

ILLUSION OR MAYA

The external world is false (Mithya), says the advaita vedantin. It is illusion like water in a desert, a rope mistaken for a snake or a dream experience. What about water seen in a pond, a rope seen as rope only and waking experiences? To the Vedantin the latter are also illusions but the former are illusions within illusions. On this basis, the food the Vedantins eat, the house they live in, the money they collect from their adherents, nay, their very existence should all be unreal! Still they indulge in them.

THEORY OF TWO TRUTHS

To get over this contradiction, they have invented the theory of two truths: Paramartha Satya and Vyavaharika Satva.

Paramartha Satva is truth of the ultimate reality. Vyavaharika Satva is provisional or phantom truth. In other words, the objective world is true for all practical purposes and the pramanas (sources of knowledge) viz. Pratyaksha (perception) and Anumana (inference) are relevant only with regard to Vyavaharika Satya or provisional truth which will appear as truth so long as one is under the spell of ignorance (Avidya). Once the veil of ignorance is removed, the objective world will become unreal and there will be self realisation or merging of the individual soul (Jivatma) with the supreme soul (paramatma).

This is nothing but a piece of sophistry which no sane person can accept.

MAYA, A PARALLEL FORCE

According to Sankara, the highest reality is the non-dual principle called Brahman which is pure consciousness. There is no sense in saying that the eternal consciousness is revealing itself, for there is no one to whom it could reveal itself. Revelation implies a revealer as well as a recipient of revelation.

If Brahman is devoid of all attributes, how can he be real or unreal?

The theory of Maya is another difficult problem in the advaita philosophy. If the illusory appearance of the world is equated to maya, what is this maya and where is it? If it is in Brahman, how can brahman which is pure consciousness and has no attributes be associated with Maya. If Maya belongs to Brahman, how can there be monism? If maya can co-exist with Brahman, it constitutes a powerful and parallel force against Brahman, and can never be annihilated.

CHAMPION OF SANATANA DHARMA

During Sankara's time there were a number of states which had adopted Buddhism. Jainism was also prevalent. The Kapalikas and Tantrikas were spreading their cult though imperceptibly. The need for counteracting all this was strongly felt by brahmanism. Sankara came forward as their champion and preached vigorously for the establishment of Sanatana Dharma. It is not clear whether he was patronised by any of the ruling princes of his time. He saw the need for the sanction of the law givers for the establishment of Varnasrama and Sanatana Dharma on a firm footing and said "ditto" to whatever Manu, the law giver, had said.

Manu clearly expressed the view that the masses (the sudras or advijas) should be kept under perpetual subjection working for the benefit of the 1st three castes (the dvijas). This could be done only if they were kept superstitious and made to accept their lot in society believing in the theory of Karma. Sankara contributed not a little to this and for this inglorious and inhuman work he is admired and acclaimed as a "humanist" by his followers!



UNTOUCHABILITY IN MODERN STYLE

When Junior Sankaracharya visited Calcutta, a few months ago, the local population committed the offence of touching his feet. He condescended by not prohibiting them. But immediately after, he rushed to the bath room so that he would be free from pollution.

MODIFIED VERSION OF UNTOUCHABILITY !

SANKARA AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

Prof. SURENDRA K. S. AJNAT, M.A.

Shankara took birth in a Namboodri Brahmin family at Kaladi in Kerala in 788 A.D. and died in 820 A.D. He lived only for 32 years. He revived Hinduism. So, orthodox Hindus call him an incarnation of God Shiva, though during his life time he was badly rejected and cast away. He was a great Sanskrit Scholar and writer. He is known all over the world as an exponent of Monotheistic Vedanta (Advaita-Vedanta).

He wrote commentaries on the Gita, the upanishads and the Brahma Sutras and composed separate treatises wherein he presented his views on the Vedanta.

According to him, there was no reality in worldly things which were mere illusions. He stressed that one must attain salvation by trying to be united in spirit with the unchanging Absolute Soul or Self (Brahman) which was infinite and eternal. According to him the self (Brahman) is the sole reality and all else is the phantasmagoric (optical illusion) production of nescience (Avidya).

COULD NOT DEFINE BRAHMAN

However, here it is interesting to note that as remarked by Nirad C. Chaudhary "Shankara could not define that being (the Brahman) in any terms which were comprehensible to men who knew life as lived. Not only Shankara, but all the revealed scriptures on whose interpretation he himself based the authority of his personal philosophy failed to define the universal soul as anything except as a negation of all that was accessible to the senses, to thought and feelings even 'Neti, Neti' 'Not that, not that' was all that they could say about it".¹

He could not also prove by reasoning the illusory nature of the physical body and the world which had objective reality in the eyes of other schools of thought existing then. The Philosophy of Shankara was a pot-pourri. He mixed some of the Buddhist teachings in the Hindu teachings of Upanishads which themselves were not the composition of one man.

Out of contempt for the Vedantic philosophy of Shankara, the pandits used to say contemptuously: 'In the Kaliyuga there will be a large number of Vedantins?' After all, what can be more hypocritical than this Vedanta of Shankara which denies

¹ The continent of circe, P. 173

the existence of even such big and concrete things as the Mount Everest, Indian Ocean, Asian Continent, mines of coal and iron and so on? Nirad C. Chaudhary again writes: "No wonder then that the vedantist who regarded the world as an illusion was himself held up to ridicule by the Hindu Society as an illusionist. To ordinary Hindus he and his fellow philosophers appeared like men who were devoid of common sense, if not even sense".²

MIGHT TRIUMPHS

In a way, he could not be said to be a philosopher at all. He was merely a commentator, yet he succeeded in becoming the great Acharya of Hindu philosophy with the help of some Shaivite kings like Sudhanva and their armies which accompanied him wherever he went to debate with others. Wherever he sensed that he had no answer to questions raised by his opponents, armies were let loose as is evident from the accounts in Shankara Dig Vijaya Mahakavya written by a sycophant of the illusionist.

BLIND FAITH IN VEDAS

Shankara was conscious of his philosophical shortcomings. To save his skin, he made the scriptures his front man. He emphatically says: 'The Veda which is eternal and the source of knowledge may be allowed to have for its object firmly established things and hence the perfection of that knowledge which is founded on the Vedas cannot be denied by any of the logicians of the past, present or future. We have thus established the perfection of our knowledge which is based on Upanishads. Apart from it, perfect knowledge is impossible; its

SHANKARA AND CASTE

Shankara advocated that everything except Brahman was illusory. But he could not give up the caste system, an illusory offshoot of an illusory thing called world. Shankara is inhuman towards the Shudras i.e. all the scheduled classes, backward classes and scheduled tribes. He devotes an entire section of his commentary on Brahma Sutra to explain this. He says that the 'shudra' is not entitled to study the vedas, the only 'fountain-head of wisdom' in those days. The corollary is that the question of the shudra ever attaining real freedom does not arise. Living thus under eternal bondage, the shudra is supposed eternally to serve the dvijas (the upper castes.)

disregard would lead to absence of 'final release' (Moksha) of the transmigrating soul. Our final position, therefore, is that on the basis of scriptures and reasoning subordinate to scriptures, Brahman is to be considered the cause and substance of the world.³

SCRIPTURE vs RATIONALISM

Fearing the possible onslaught of logicians and rationalists, he teaches his followers not to follow the path of reason lest they should abandon him. He says: 'As the thoughts of man are altogether unfettered, reasoning which disregards the holy texts and rests on individual opinion only, has no proper foundation. We see how arguments,

² Ibid P. 174

³ Brahma Sutra 2/1/11

which some clever men put forth taking great pains, are shown by people still cleverer to be fallacious and how the arguments of the latter again are refuted in their turn by others. On account of diversity of opinions, it is impossible to accept mere reasoning as having a sure foundation. Nor can we get over this difficulty by accepting as well founded the reasoning of some person of recognised mental eminence, may he be Kapila or anybody else, since we observe that even men of the most undoubted mental eminence such as Kapila or Kanada too have contradicted one another.⁴

Commenting on this absurd sophism, Mr. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya rightly observes: 'What one proves on the strength of reason is disproved by another on the strength of reason again. So, it is best to surrender reason in favour of the faith in holy texts. One can well argue that since one swordsman proves himself better than another, swordsmanship as a technique of fighting is by nature useless: one fights best only when one surrenders the sword, or fights unarmed'.⁵

The beauty of reasoning is that it enables us to arrive at unobjectionable arguments by means of refutation of objectionable past arguments. It is sheer nonsense to say that because the poorva paksha (the first part of an argument) is ill-founded, the Siddhanta (conclusion) should be ill-founded too, for there is no valid reason to maintain that a man must be stupid because his elder brother was stupid.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ What is living and what is dead in Indian Philosophy P. 203

WHICH SHANKARACHARYA IS SUPERIOR?

Mr. Colvalkar, the ex-R.S.S. Chief, narrated how the four Shankaracharyas of the various Mutts established by Adi Shankara were present at Allahabad on the occasion of a Kumbha Mela. They could not agree to sit on one platform. Each one wanted his seat to be somewhat higher than the others, to show his seniority. When the whole world and its occupants are an illusion, are not 'Mela' and 'seniority' illusions too?

ESCAPISM AS A SOLUTION

What was the reason for the popularity of Shankara? The answer is quite easy to find. People suffering from multifarious sorrows, miseries, injuries, tensions and privations need a way out in every age every place. In the days of Shankara, too, people needed it. Shankara put forth a panacea. He adopted a method of creating hallucinations. He told them that in reality there was nothing like sorrow, pain, joy or happiness. All things were illusory. His advice was auto-suggestion to get rid of the natural body consciousness.

HOLY MEGALOMANIAC

He composed poems which contained insertions like—'I am not born', 'For me there is no death', 'I am the blessed peaceful one who is the cause of origin and dissolution of the world' etc. The poems were directed against scepticism and worldly logic. 'Such a holy megalomania' says Heinrich Zimmer, 'goes past the bounds of sense'.

SANKARA CONTRADICTS HIMSELF*

phantasmogoric production of nescience (avidya). The cosmos is an effect of Nescience and so also is that interior ego (ahamkara) which is everywhere mistaken for the self. Maya, illusion mocks the perceiving cogitating and intuitive faculties at every turn. The self is hidden deep. But when the self is known, there is no nescience, no maya, no avidya, ie. no macrocosm or microcosm, no world "

MAYA vs MONISM

Sankara declared the Epprovable and cognizable world as illusory and the unprovable and assumed Brahman as real, attributeless yet associated with a certain power—a parallel power—called Maya. The introduction of Maya in advaita strikes at the very root of the doctrine of unitary and absolute Brahman and shatters the idealistic monism of Shankara.

SANKARA'S DEFENCE

Some of the vedantists themselves could not concur with Shankara's exposition of his philosophy. To them he cited the authority of the scriptures and argued that no proof can be adduced for the "self" which is the basis of all proofs and established prior to proof. One cannot doubt oneself. Brahman cannot be proved logically nor soul and rebirth sustained by reason. All such efforts would lead only to a blind alley. He had examined all other philosophies and made the remarkable discovery that they all had shortcomings except his own.

*Source: The role of Bhagavat Gita in Indian History by Premnath Bazaz.

During Sankaracharya's time, there was the fear that Buddhism might anyday rejuvenate itself and constitute a serious rival to Hinduism. To prevent such an eventuality, Sankaracharya directed his main attack on the Buddhists. For this purpose and to meet the Rationalists' attack, he made use of any argument that came in handy even if it meant the disowning of his own philosophy.

SANKARA'S PHILOSOPHY

He enunciated the theory of Maya and put up his advaita philosophy. His philosophy is summed up by Zimmer in the following words :

" Basing his reasoning on the Vedic formula 'Tat tvam asi—that thou art' he developed with unwavering consistency a systematic doctrine taking the self (atman) as the sole reality and regarding all else as

Such arguments could not silence the rationalists and materialists. To combat them he drew inspiration from certain verses in the Gita and put forward a theory of pantheistic monism which declared that everything in the Universe is Brahman. This is complete abandonment of the advaitic dogma of the unreality of the phenomenal world.

GITA'S CONTRADICTIONS

The Gita is a veritable mine from which support could be found for any and every sort of theistic view. There is no consistent theory of the universe or reality either in the Gita or in the Upanishads. There are several contradictory views in the Gita. Shankara took pains to reconcile them and twist them as it suited him.

SANKARA'S MATERIALISM

To spite the Mahayana Buddhists and to meet the Rationalist arguments he went to the extent of expounding a purely materialistic theory of cognition, thereby giving up his own philosophy. He said :

"The nonexistence of eternal things cannot be maintained because we are conscious of eternal things. Why should we pay attention to a man who affirms that no external thing exists? That the outward things exists apart from consciousness has necessarily to be accepted on the ground of the nature of consciousness. Nobody when perceiving a post or a wall is conscious of his perception only, but all men are conscious of posts and walls as

objects of their perception... ..
The variety of mental impressions is caused altogether by the variety of external things perceived. This apparent world whose existence is guaranteed by all the means of knowledge cannot be denied ".....

He further said :

"Certainly Shruti cannot be an authority as against observed facts. Even if hundreds of vedic texts declare that fire is cold and devoid of light they cannot become authority on this point".

TRIUMPH OF MATERIALISM

Commenting on this, M. N. Roy observes :

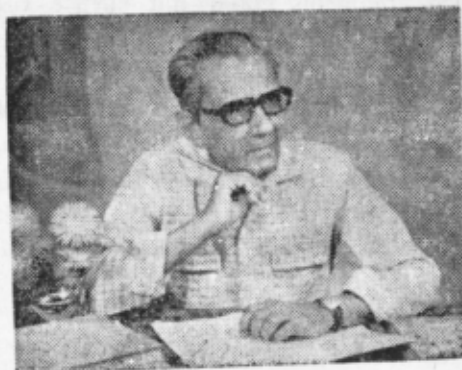
"Here Sankaracharya is combating his whole philosophy; once the issues are joined on the philosophical ground, the triumph inevitably goes to Materialism".

Another puzzling aspect of his teaching is his preaching of bhakti marga and the worship of a personal god as a way to Moksha, while the advaita philosophy clearly lays down that moksha or liberation consists in the 'atman' and 'paramatman' becoming one. He composed songs praising goddess Shakti Maya Devi giving up his nondualism.

ORTHODOXY DENOUNCES SANKARA

The orthodox Hindu section looked on his reorientation of Gita doctrines and Upanishadic monism and adoption of materialistic attitude, with disfavour. They shunned and denounced him as an apostate and when his mother died, no brahmin came forward to perform the obsequies.

MESSAGE FROM I.R.A.'S NEW PRESIDENT



Dear Fellow Rationalists,

Firstly, let me thank you for nominating me as the President of the Indian Rationalist Association.

I am shouldering this responsibility in a spirit of humility and will devote myself to the furtherance of the ideology of Rationalism. We are passing through the greatest crisis in the history of the Nation. After 30 years of Independence our masses as also the educated classes are still steeped in superstitions, inhibitions and torturous customs which sap our energies. We must be determined to create an atmosphere of fearlessness not only in the political field but also in the field of social changes.

I appeal to the self-centred intelligentsia to come forward from their shells and lead the masses towards a scientific way of living. Helpless people approach 'godmen' to deliver them from their miseries and these godmen dole out ancient and fabricated theories which have no relevance today. We should endeavour to serve our people by spreading rationalism through debates, discussions, dialogues, writings and meetings.

To this end let us devote ourselves.

Yours fraternally,

(Sd.) KAMALASHANKAR PANDYA

President.

MESSAGE FROM I. R. A.'S OUTGOING PRESIDENT

I am very happy to know that the new Managing Committee of our Association have nominated Mr. Kamala Shankar Pandya as the new President for the year 1977-78. As the outgoing President I have great pleasure to extend my hearty greetings to Mr. Kamala Shankar Pandya. I am sure that the Indian Rationalist Association will forge ahead in all its activities under his dynamic leadership. I wish him all the best.

From the beginning religion has been connected with every civilization that has arisen on the face of the earth. Religion has been and is a divisive force. It itself has been and is divided. Intolerance is the curse of it. It is doing more damage than it has already wrought throughout the centuries.

I wish the members of the Association and other rationalists throughout the country every success in their work for the cause of Rationalism.

(Sd.) M.C. Joseph,
Irinjalakuda.



AN IMAGINARY CONVERSATION

T. S. SELVARAJ

An Atheist (A), an Advaitin (Ad), a Vishitadvaitin (V. Ad), a Dvaitin (D) and a Shudda Advaitin (S. Ad) all gather in a meadow, on the outskirts of a village. Time 6 a.m.

- A. What a beautiful scenery. The emerald carpet of grass surrounded by hills on three sides and the lake and wood beyond on the other side, with birds flying in the air, cattle grazing in the distance, and morning sun reflected in the waters is a feast to the eye. Nature has showered all her graces here.
- Ad. It is all mere appearance. Why go eulogising nature. Our Sankara has said, there is only one reality, that is Brahman, the universal soul. All else is Maya.
- A. What is this nonsense of a Maya (turning round and spying a snake). There is a snake here. Give me your stick, I will beat it lest it should do its mischief.
- Ad. (Handing the stick) Please do and save us all. I am nervous.
- A. (after killing the snake) The snake is now dead. We are all safe now.
- Ad. It is not a snake you killed. It is only a rope and you beat it. It is Maya that made you see it as a snake.
- A. Confound your maya, you hypocrite. you saw the snake and asked me to kill it and after you find yourself safe, you start singing your old song.
- V.Ad. The advaitin is not correct. What you saw is a real snake and not a rope. Soul, cosmos and god are all realities. The first two realities are dependent on the third and together they constitute one whole. So said our Ramanuja.
- A. How can soul and god be real. They do not exist except in your imagination.
- D. The advaitin is wrong. So is the Visistadvaitin. There are two realities : God and Cosmos. Both are independent. So said our great Madhava. The

beauty of the scenery you praised and the snake you saw are very real. There is no such thing as Maya. If Brahman created Maya, he must be a fantastic juggler.

S.Ad. The Dvaitin is wrong. So is the Visistadvaitin. The advaitin is partially correct. What you see is appearance no doubt. But that appearance is not false. Illusion is a force created by god. So said our great Vallabha.

A. You all seem to be singing the same song with different tunes. You change the meaning of words. What is false, you call real. What is real, you call false. You confuse ignorant people and make them believe in your falsehood. You earn money on falsehood. You are all a set of 'humbugs'.

Ad. I see your point. Our great Sankara, though he called the world and everything in the world unreal, has in another place accepted the reality of external objects. I am myself confused.

A. Your Sankara was an opportunist, disowned by his own clan as an apostate. Fie on you all.



RENUNCIATION—SANKARACHARYA TYPE

Junior Sankaracharya is supposed to have renounced his family life. However, his family has not renounced him. Recently the Mutt has been negotiating for a plot of land in Salem town. Junior Sankaracharya's brother has been taking the lead—for what pecuniary consideration, he only knows.

SMALL POX SHORTENS SANKARA'S LIFE

The predecessor to the present Senior Sankaracharya suddenly died of small pox, though he has been avoiding pollution from human beings. It is time Sankaracharyas respected human beings more than germs.

News and Notes

MR. PANDYA, NEW PRESIDENT OF I.R.A.

At the Annual General Body Meeting of I.R.A. held on 17th July, 1977, 72-year old Mr. Kamalashankar Pandya, B.A., was nominated as the President of I.R.A. for the year 1977-78. Being a freedom fighter and a veteran Rationalist, Mr. Kamalashankar Pandya is a popular figure in Gujarat.

Mr. Pandya, who has been in the rationalist movement right from 1930s, founded Gujarat Rationalist Association in 1976 and is planning to start a Rationalist Journal in Gujarat. Though otherwise a Gandhian, he never spared Mr. Gandhi for his religious beliefs. Mr. Pandya has written a voluminous autobiography in Gujarati. He has also a number of articles in Gujarati and English to his credit.

Messrs. M.V. Ramamurthy, B.A., B.L., (Hyderabad), Mr. S.L. Bharati, M.A., B.L., (Madras), Mr. P. K. Narayanan, B.Com., (Nagpur) and Prof. S. Nanjundaswami, M.A., M.L., (Bangalore) have been renominated as Vice Presidents of I.R.A. for one more term along with Prof. Surendra K.S. Ajnat, M.A., (Jullundur). Mr. T.S. Selvaraj, B.A., Founder Secretary of the Association and Printer of FREETHOUGHT was unanimously elected the Executive Vice President.

Mr. A. Suryanarayana, B.Com., A.C.A., has again been unanimously elected as the

General Secretary of the Association for the fourth consecutive term.

The following are the other Office Bearers and Committee Members elected for the year 1977-78.

Joint Secretaries :	Mr. Peter Sam, B.A., B.L.
	Mr. P.V. Prakash, B.A.
Treasurer :	Mrs. Vasundhara, B.A.
Asst. Treasurer :	Mr. S. Selvagana- pathi, B.Com.
Committee Members :	Mr. C.A. Seshadri, M.A., LL.B.
	Mr. Dinesh Netti, M.Sc., (Ph.D.)
	Mr. Chander Rai, B.E.
	Mr. Narasimhan, B.E.

SABNIS PASSES AWAY

With great regret we announce the sad demise of the veteran Rationalist, Mr. P.J. Sabnis at Nasik in Maharashtra. He is survived by his wife. An advocate by profession, Mr. Sabnis was an active rationalist and was also the Secretary of I.R.A. in 1957-58. I.R.A. at its Managing Committee meeting held on 17-7-77 passed a Condolence Resolution.

ATTACK ON RATIONALISTS

On 23rd June, 1977 a public meeting was held in Baroda under the auspices of

Gujarat Rationalist Association presided over by Mr. Kamalashanker Pandya, President. A resolution was passed condemning assault and beating of Mr. Nomanbhai, Contractor, by the orthodox devotees of the High Priest of the Dawoodi Behra Community for crusading against the corruption of the High Priest in the affairs of the Public Funds.

By another resolution the meeting condemned the murder of Mr. Manibhai B. Patel, a crusader against the tyranny of a sect of the Swaminarayan Religion. The culprits are not traced.

By yet another resolution the meeting called upon the youth not to fritter away their energies on petty social reform, but to expose Godmen, miracle makers and also educate the other youths to think on rational lines and act boldly. Shortly a youth wing to work on these lines will be formed in Gujarat.

K.K. MAKWANA, Baroda.

KOVOOR'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Karnataka Rationalist Association held a public meeting on 19th June, 1977 at the Malleswaram Ladies Association High School, Bangalore to celebrate Dr. Kovoor's 80th year. Prof. A.M. Dharmalingam, President of the Association presided. Messrs. V.T. Rajshekara Shetty, G.G. Sivapur K. Muthuselman, A.C. Krishna and others spoke.

MYSORE RATIONALISTS CONDEMN YAGNA

A three day "Navakunda Parjanya Maha Yagna" was held in Mysore from May 20th under the auspices of Karnataka Arya Prathinidhi Sabha praying for rains. As much as

1,000 kgs. of "Navana Samagri" consisting of pure ghee and a mixture of various country drugs and herbs were consigned to the flames.

The Karnataka Vicharavadi Vekkoota took out processions on 20th and 21st May, 1977 in the main streets of the city shouting slogans against perpetuation of superstitions in the name of "Yagna" as well as squandering valuable food materials like ghee. This "Yagna" was being performed after the region had regular and timely rains. Mr. M. Arya Mitra, Deputy Commissioner of Mysore (who presided over the "Yagna" in his official capacity) who participated in this superstitious activity was condemned through representations, press statements, hand bills and wall posters. A large number of leading citizens, which included lawyers, university professors and scientists, besides a large number of students and workers actively participated in the processions. A signature campaign against the anti-scientific activity of the deputy commissioner is in progress.

P.A. KUMAR, Mysore.

VIZIANAGARAM RATIONALISTS

Rational Thinkers Forum, a new Association has come up in Vizianagaram. Messrs. Prakasam and Naveen were elected as the President and Secretary, respectively. The Principal aim of the Rational Thinkers Forum is to uphold the Supremacy of Reason and to reject all arbitrary assumptions of authority. The Association is being affiliated to I.R.A.

V. NAVEEN, Vizianagaram.

RATIONALIST WEDDING

Mr. Amritlal, M.A. was wedded on July 3, 1977 to Ms. Kamala, M.A. in a secular and rationalist way at Banga, Punjab, the second in two months. After a short speech by

Prof. Ajnat, General Secretary, Punjab Rationalist Association, the couple exchanged



garlands and the marriage was complete.

OLLUR RATIONALIST CONVENTION

Ollur Rationalist Unit conducted a Convention on 26-6-77. Mr. M.B.K., Vice President of Kerala Rationalist Association presented the subject "Rationalism and Religion". In the evening session Mr. U. Kalanathan, Secretary, K.R.A., lectured on "Science and Religion".

In the public meeting conducted at the Ollur market area, Mr. N.K. Edakkayil and Mr. Kalanathan spoke

APARTHEID ON THE ROADS

The racist authorities of Oudtshorn, a South African town near the famous Cango caves, recently ordered the parking space outside these caves to be divided in two and to put up a "Non-White Parking Area" sign at one of them and a "White Parking Area" sign at the other. "All we are doing is to make facilities at the caves conform with the policy of the government", said town clerk Mike Schultz. True, policemen on duty there wonder what to do if a white comes in a car driven by an African.

MALAYALA NADU'S HOAX

During the recent months 'Malayala nadu' — a Malayalee obscurantist newspaper attracted the attention of Rationalists in India by its false propaganda against Dr. Kovoov and other Rationalists. The paper announced that though one Mr. Narayana Pillai had deposited Rs. 1,000/- with its Editor, Dr. Kovoov refused to arrange for testing his claims. In order to erase the wrong impression sought to be created by Malayalanadu, we briefly furnish the facts of the case as ascertained from the General Secretary of Kerala Rationalist Association.

1. Mr. Narayana Pillai claimed that he would walk on water but he did not deposit Rs. 1,000/- with Dr. A.T. Kovoov or any of the latter's authorised Nominees. But Mr. S.K. Nair, Editor of Malayala Naidu claimed that Mr. Narayana Pillai had deposited Rs. 1,000/- with him.

2. Mr. Narayana Pillai's condition was that he should be paid Rs. 1 lakh in Indian Currency. He also wanted the amount to be deposited in an Indian Bank, before his claims are tested. This demand was made in the presence of the then Kerala Minister Mr. M.N. Govindan Nair. The Minister gave surety for Rs. 1 lakh for Dr. Kovoov, and asked Pillai to proceed with the demonstration of his powers. But this surety was also rejected

3. Dr. Kovoov never refused to test the claims of Mr. Narayana Pillai in accordance with the terms of his challenge.

4. Mr. Narayana Pillai or his Swami has not been subjected to any preliminary test. They avoided the preliminary test saying that Dr. Kovoov has not deposited the amount in a Bank.

5. On 17-4-77, Mr. B. Premanand, a Life Member of I.R.A. came forward through 'Janayugam' with his own offer of Rs. 1 lakh. He informed Mr. Narayana Pillai and Mr. S.K. Nair that he was ready to deposit Rs. 1 lakh on behalf of Dr. Kovoov in any bank. At this juncture, Mr. Narayana Pillai withdrew from the field most unceremoniously saying that "his swami would not walk over water" (Refer: Malayala Nadu weekly dated 27-2-77).

6. The Editor of Malayala Nadu is believed to be an agent of Sai Baba. Though Mr. Pillai and Mr. S.K. Nair were indulging in mischievous and indecent attacks on Dr. Kovoov and other rationalists, they were silenced by the timely offer of Mr. B. Premanand.

The full text of Dr. Kovoov's letter addressed to Illustrated Weekly of India on this subject is reproduced below:

"Mr. K. Achuthan says that one Narayana Pillai made the stipulated deposit to the editor of 'Malayalanadu' as a token of his acceptance of my challenge (IWI—May 24)

My permanent challenge to all those who claim divine powers was published all over the world at various times and in various languages since 1963. This challenge comprising 23 items is governed by certain conditions stipulated to prevent fraud. The names of my nominees in various countries authorised to accept the earnest deposit, and to conduct the preliminary test on my behalf, were also given.

During the four all-India "Divine Miracle Exposure Campaigns" conducted by me and party in recent years, the Indian Rationalist Association distributed thousands of pamphlets throughout India containing

the 23 items of my challenge, condition governing the test and the award, and the list of my nominees in various States. The editor of the "Malayalanadu" who, I understand, is an ardent devotee of Sai Baba, was not a nominee of mine.

Though numerous persons have boasted through newspapers and letters that they are prepared to take up my challenge, only two—Dr. G. Vankata Rao of Bangalore and Kjell Eide of Sweden paid the earnest deposit to my nominees in India and Sweden respectively. Both of them backed out in the end, and I got their deposits.

If the said Narayana Pillai is prepared to pay the deposit of Rs. 1,000/- to my nominee Mr. A. Suryanarayana, General Secretary, Indian Rationalist Association, 28, Pantheon Road, Madras-8, his claims of supernatural powers will be tested strictly in accordance with my challenge and conditions. If he wins he will be entitled to my award of one lakh rupees and his deposit of thousand rupees.

Colombo,
7-6-77

(Sd.) Abraham T. Kovoov
President, S.L.R.A."

NEW OFFICE BEARERS FOR B.R.A.

The following are the new Office Bearers and Managing Committee Members of Bombay Rationalist Association elected for the year 1977-78.

President	: Mr. Y.A. Lokhandwala
Vice-President	: .. Shankar Pandya
Secretary	: .. V. S. Kurup
Joint Secretaries	: .. Santosh
	: .. J. V. Relani
Treasurer	: .. V. N. Ramanathan
Committee Members	: .. Ramgopal Iglasia
	: .. M. K. Sawant
	: .. V. V. Francis
	: .. Surendra Babu
	: .. V. N. Gupte
	: .. M. G. Radhakrishnan
	: .. Pappanamkot Prabhakaran.

AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AN APPEAL

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Readers may be aware that FREETHOUGHT is being published for a noble cause and not with profit motive. Unless all the rationalists share the burden, it is difficult for the journal to survive.

Treasurer, I.R.A.

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Membership No.	Name	Place
Patron Member :		
PMF—2	Mr. Ray Standiford	California (U.S.A.)
Ordinary Members :		
M—396	Mr. G. R. Menon, B.Tech.	Ahmedabad (Gujarat)
—397	Mr. C Mohan Das	Palghat (Kerala)
—398	Mr. K. S. Kalidas	Hyderabad (A.P.)
—399	Mrs P. Lakshmi	Nellore (A.P.)
—400	Dr. U. R. Prasad, B.Sc., B.E., Ph.D.	Bangalore (Karnataka)
—401	Mr. Dasam Venkata Rao, M.Com.	Attini (A.P.)
—402	Mr. S. Krishna Murti, B.Sc., LL.B.	Hyderabad (A.P.)
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—410	Mr. T. Srinivasa Rao, M.Sc. (Tech.)	Kakinada (A.P.)
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Student Members :		
SM—29	Mr. Senapmani Harerao	Warangal (A.P.)
—30	Mr. K. Sridhar Reddy	Warangal (A.P.)
—31	Mr. G. Narasa Reddy B.Com.	Bangalore (Karnataka)
—32	Mr. A. Jayasheela P.U.C.	UJIRE (Karnataka)

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